SIGHTS ON THE RIVER FRONT

Pen Pictures of an Interesting Side of Life in Omaha.

SQUATTERS WHO LIVE IN BOARD SHACKS

Careless, Contented People with No Business Burdens or Ambitions to Worry Them—Women Saw Wood and Carry Water.

The Omaha water front is a queer little world of its own, inhabited by care-free people who live contentedly with no axes to grind, no ambitions to satisfy, and with no particular mission on earth except to eat, drink, sleep, fish, hunt and have an easy time generally.

The water front is the cosmopolitan end of Omaha. It is to this city what the Poplar street Klondike, with its "Scrap Iron Nell," is to St. Louis, down on the big Mississippi. In a way, it compares with the Bowery in New York, for Bowery language prevails.

This little world is in evidence more or less all the way from several blocks below the Union Pacific bridge north to the East Omaha bridge and beyond. These people, as a rule, do not live in house boats, but their pine-board shanties of one or two rooms are so near the water's edge that a spring freshet would almost send driftwood through their doors. But they don't seem to have any apprehension of floods or other disaster, and a thousand miles of travel would not reveal a happier lot.

Women Saw the Wood.

Upon the women of this cosmopolitan colony devolves the greater part of the home work, such as sawing wood, carrying water, and so on. The writer, in the course of a stroll along the river front, observed a middle-aged woman sawing driftwood. She had gathered it along the river and carried it into the back yard of her little board shack—and the back yard consisted of an almost perpendicular bluff—where she was cutting it down to fit her cooking stove. The saw she used was a rickety old blade, squeaking as if it had never tasted oil. She puffed and blowed like a steam engine, for the labor of dragging the wood up the hill had shortened her breath. In her mouth was an old clay pipe, such as may be had two for a nickel. She chewed the stem as she puffed away at her work. These people are sociable, and the woman wood-sawyer stopped work long enough to talk about the river and things in general. She "reckoned" the "June rise" would send the water up to her cabin door, but she wasn't going to "bother her head" about it till it happened. She said most all the "neighbors" had a "passel o' mouty bad young'uns," and nearly all of them had more dogs than necessary, she "allowed." She said she had lived in her present abode two years. Prior to that she had lived in a house boat on the Iowa side of the river. When asked if she preferred a shanty to a house boat, she replied that she wouldn't like to live in a house boat because "it has got to that trashy triflin' folks take to the boats." Respectable people can no longer afford these floating domiciles, she declared, and as for her, she expected to always live in a shanty.

Two arm loads of wood were sawed and pitched into the kitchen—not carried in, but pitched—and then the woman was ready for another task. She brought from the house a two-gallon tin bucket. She descended the hill leading down to the river as nimbly as a mountain-climbing goat, and walked out on a big log projecting into the water. The wind blew her unkempt hair—nondescript as to color—in every direction, but she didn't seem to mind it. After she had filled her bucket she tossed it up to her lips and took a drink with as much relish, apparently, as though she were drinking Manitou or other high-priced water. She climbed the hill as easily as she had descended, and her household had water for cooking and drinking purposes in quantity sufficient to last until after supper, she said.

Horror of the Courts.

When questioned as to her name she replied: "Ax me no questions, an' I'll tell ye no lies; I hain't nuver been in court till yit, an' I don't want to git thar now." She apparently has a horror of courts, and the query as to her name created suspicion that she might be wanted as a witness in some case.

Under a big bluff further down the river a group of men and boys sat idly casting pebbles into the stream. They were probably waiting away from home until after the women had gathered the daily drift wood and carried the water.

The woman who sawed the wood and smoked her clay pipe is typical of the river front colony. Picture her and you have a fair portrayal of the average dweller there. Some of the men are employed as laborers, but many of them do not work except part of the year. There are saloons in the vicinity and more or less beer is drank over the bar and out of cans, but as a rule these people are not vicious. They may occasionally indulge in a fight, but in the aggregate they are as peaceable as though they lived amid more elevating environments.

Last summer when the weather was hot the river dwellers solved the problem of sleeping. They built scaffolds in their back yards and covered them overhead either with boards or canvas. This gave protection from the dew. Underneath this covering they placed their beds. Some of these scaffolds yet remain, although the advent of cool weather has done away with the out-door sleeping. A multiplicity of dogs and chickens and children is characteristic of the queer territory, although not all the inhabitants have reached the dignity and importance of "keeping chickens." The family so elevated as to "keep a cow and chickens" ranks as nobility.

The favorite way for measuring time and computing dates is by reference to the river floods. For instance, the typical denizen would say that John Jones has lived in Omaha since the "high water backed up into Bill Smith's cabin." It doesn't matter about the year or the month in which Bill Smith suffered a surfeit of water, for everybody is supposed to know all about it.

Simple as to Dress.

While there are no Worth gowns or bird-bedecked hats or diamond necklaces worn by the water front women, they are more cleanly in their dress than would naturally be supposed. The woman who sawed the wood wore a calico wrapper, somewhat faded, but fairly clean. She wore no bonnet. Water front women are not afraid of the sun and wind and when they are tanned, they don't rush to the druggist for cosmetics. Paint and face powder are unknown along the water front.

One old man, who appeared to be the patriarch of the colony, sat on a log reaching out in the water. He had nothing to do and seemingly found great pleasure in looking at the river. He said he had lived on the water for twenty years and that it was the best place he could find. "The breeze is always good down here," he said.

The parallel of these people exists in every metropolitan center. A study of them shows that the water has some strange infatuation. They cannot explain it themselves. They only know that they would rather live there than elsewhere. Many of them would not exchange their shacks for palaces in fashionable residence streets. A few of them, perhaps a very small proportion, own the ground upon which they are located, but the large majority are squatters. Their shanties are built so that they can readily move them if the owner of the land interferes and many of them have selected building sites that will probably never be questioned on account of proximity to the water. The paint brush has never invaded the territory. The natural brightness of the yellow pine is good enough. In some respects these groups look very much like a Taney county village. Taney county is the wildest bailiwick in the Ozark mountain country of Missouri. The people there do not believe in house paint and their buildings are of about the same dimensions and general character as the shacks that line the western bank of the Missouri river in Omaha.

North of the East Omaha bridge there are a few houseboats, but they are not "good form" any more and are becoming unpopular. The greater number of houseboats are on the Iowa side of the river.

River Front Dances.

Sometimes there is revelry of nights in these humble homes. A dance—the natives call it a "rag"—is the highest form of amusement. On these occasions beer is bought by the keg and the master of ceremonies draws it and passes it around. On these occasions the old-fashioned fiddler is in his element. He rubs his bow with rosin and plays "The Arkansaw Traveler," "The Irish Washerwoman," "Rouser" and other old-time "rag" music. The young swains swing the river front lassies with great gallantry, while the "caller off" yells out: "Swing your partner," "Balance all," "First lady pass" and so on. It is frequently early in the morning when these dances are finished. As a general rule they are free from disorder and the typical river dweller gives the police comparatively little work.

Among these people a dollar has great purchasing power. But little money is made and but little is needed, for tastes are simple and privation is accepted without knowing it.

The observing student of people and things may find much material in an afternoon stroll along the river bank and he will be treated kindly by men, women and children and dogs, unless he asks too many leading questions.

OLDEST POEM IN THE WORLD.

Ode to King Usertesen III Turned Into English After 5,500 Years.

Near to the pyramid at Illahun, reports the London Standard, Prof. Petrie found during his explorations in 1880-90 the extensive town occupied by the workmen employed by Usertesen II in building his pyramid and other public works. In the office where the records of the town were kept, Prof. Petrie discovered a large number of papyri. Most of these were official and legal documents, relating to the works carried on, accounts of payments to workmen, of food and provisions received and issued, fiscal accounts, census papers, etc., and all the usual accumulation of a government office—dry and uninteresting on the whole, but abounding in details which are of the greatest value to the historian and archaeologist. The more attractive fields of general and scientific literature were not, however, unrepresented, for we have works on medicine, diseases of women, veterinary surgery and mathematics; but the gem of the collection is a royal ode, or hymn of welcome addressed to Usertesen III, apparently by the people of the Favoum.

After long and patient work, these broken and torn fragments have been arranged and are now published with autotype reproductions, transcripts and partial translations by Mr. F. Llewellyn Griffith. The poem to Usertesen III is written in a fine, bold hieratic hand upon a papyrus measuring forty-six inches in length and twelve inches in width, and consisted, when complete, of six stanzas of ten lines each. Its value lies in its being certainly the oldest poem in the world, nearly fifteen centuries before the time of Moses; and also in the wonderful way in which it describes, in most figurative language, the great work that the king had done in the expansion of the Egyptian empire.

Homage to thee our Horus divine of beings.
Protecting the land, and widening its boundaries,
Enclosing the two lands within the compass of his hands and seizing the nations in his grasp.
The tongue of his majesty bindeth Nubia, his utterances put to flight the Bedouin.
Sole one of youthful vigor, guarding his frontier; suffering not his subjects to faint; but causing all the people to repose unto daylight.
As to his trained youth, in their slumbers, his heart (mind) is their protection.
His decrees have formed his boundaries; his word maketh strong the two regions.

Twice joyful are the gods; thou hast established their offerings.
Twice joyful are thy forefathers; thou hast increased their portions.
Twice joyful is Egypt in thy strong arm; thou hast protected the ancient regime.
Twice joyful are the people in thy policy; thy mighty spirit hath taken upon itself their welfare.
Twice joyful are thy paid young troops; thou hast made them to prosper.
Twice joyful are thy veterans; thou hast made them to renew their youth.

Twice great is the lord of his city; he is as it were a dike damming the stream in its water floods.
Twice great is the lord of his city; he is as it were a cool shelter, letting every man repose unto daylight.
Twice great is the lord of his city; he is as it were an asylum, delivering the frightened one from his enemy.
Twice great is the lord of his city; he is as it were a verdant shade and cool place in the time of harvest.
Twice great is the lord of his city; he is as it were a corner warm and dry in time of winter.
Twice great is the lord in his city; he is as it were a rock barring the blast in the time of tempest.

The closing lines are:

He hath come; he hath made the people of Egypt to live; he hath destroyed its afflictions.
He hath come; he hath made men and women to live; and hath opened the throat (voice?) of the captives.
He hath come; we nurture one; we bury our aged ones (in peace).

DAKOTANS ON THE FIRING LINE

Instances of Conspicuous Gallantry in the Luzon Campaigns.

CAPTAIN LEADS WITH A BIG GUN

How the Nebraska Hotchkiss Got Over a Bridge—Feats of Strength—Debilitating Effect of a Hard March.

Acts of gallantry by the volunteers in the Philippines were so numerous that many of them escaped the vigilance of correspondents. South Dakota troops rivaled other regiments in that respect, but their deeds did not receive the measure of praise they were entitled to. A few of them, recounted by officers of the regiment, are given prominence in the San Francisco Chronicle:

"It is a delicate matter," said Colonel Frost, when questioned, "to discriminate among the men who showed conspicuous bravery—there were so many of them. There was one instance, however, that stands out prominently, and no man of ordinary bravery or physique could have fitted so well into the emergency. I refer to the gallant feat of Captain Clayton P. Van Houghten of Company D, First South Dakota United States volunteers, who carried a Hotchkiss gun across a dismantled bridge at the battle of Marilao river under heavy fire."

The act referred to by Colonel Frost is familiar to every man in the regiment, and the following account is written from the statements made by Colonel Frost, Chaplain Daley and Assistant Surgeon Thompson:

The South Dakota regiment started from Meycauyan March 27, one battalion formed in skirmish line, the second held in reserve and the third advancing at right angles to the first toward the river. The Filipinos occupied two lines of intrenchments on the opposite side of the river, and with their Mausers opened a severe fire before the South Dakota men could return the volleys with their Springfields, so they had to advance and take the fire poured in on them. When they had got pretty close they were ordered to lie down. It seemed equally perilous whether they advanced or retreated, and the men of the regiment have the reputation of not knowing how to show their backs.

Nebraska's Battery.

"Retreat was never sounded in the South Dakota regiment," proudly said Dr. Thompson, who, himself, hardly ever left the firing line. It was hoped that the Hotchkiss battery of the Nebraska regiment that had been sent around on the left would open fire and distract the attention of the Filipinos, but it was not heard and after a very few minutes the First battalion was ordered to charge. Lieutenant Sidney E. Morrison of E company was killed here and several others were wounded. Adjutant and First Lieutenant Jonas H. Lien, a brother of the mayor of Sioux Falls, fell mortally wounded between the first and second lines of trenches which the Filipinos had abandoned, firing as they retreated. As the second line of trenches was reached Lieutenant F. H. Adams was killed instantly and others were also killed or wounded there. The Filipinos had by that time crossed the river and, having reformed, were making for the main body of their troops, which was heavily entrenched on the north bank of the river. At this juncture Colonel Frost took Companies D and E to the bridge on our left to see if they could cross. His purpose was to get a raking fire in on the enemy's flank. The bridge had been dismantled, all the ties having been removed, but the stringers were in place and the men got across under heavy fire. The rest of the regiment had moved up to the river on the right. Lieutenant Huntington, who had left the hospital to participate in the attack, was the first officer to get across and in a few minutes there were forty or fifty men who had waded in the water to their armpits and joined his little band, all of whom were nearly exhausted by their exertions. They did not fail, however, to improve every opportunity to make a mark on the Filipinos who exposed themselves.

Shouldered the Gun.

The mountain Hotchkiss gun of the Nebraskans had by this time been brought up to the bridge, and the men who were occupying positions of extreme peril on the north side of the river were wondering why it did not come to their aid. Captain Van Houghten finally went back across the bridge, accompanied by several of his men, and asked why the gun was not brought up. He was told that it was impossible to take it across the bridge, as it would have to be dismantled and carried in sections, and that it would take two or three men to carry the gun itself. "Unlimber it and put it on my shoulder," said Van Houghten, who saw the urgent need of it to save the day, "and I'll carry it over myself." And he did, clinging to the railing with one hand and edging painfully along the narrow stringer, about four inches wide, which was all he had to walk on. The gun weighs 240 pounds, and Van Houghten, who was formerly a blacksmith and a very powerful man of fine physique, strained himself, not being fully recovered yet.

The gun carriage was taken over the bridge by the men in charge of it, assisted by some men of Company D, and, scaling the obstructions placed at the end of the bridge by the insurgents, they set up the gun, and with the aid of the infantry fire the trenches were cleared and the American troops moved into them. Without the gun Huntington and his little band, as well as Companies D and E, would probably have been cut off, as the enemy was reforming, and, seeing the small force opposed to it, seemed debating as to the advisability of a charge.

Van Houghten refuses to consider his exploit anything out of the ordinary.

"Any one would have done the same thing under the circumstances," he protests, but nobody else did it and it was an emergency that demanded prompt action.

Feats of Strength.

"Not only Van Houghten, but others of our officers surprised the Filipinos and Spanish by their feats of skill and strength. While at San Felipe we fraternized with some Spanish prisoners who were on parole and were quartered in the lower story of the building which we occupied, the upper story being the more desirable, having been reserved for ourselves. At night these Spanish officers were accustomed to amuse themselves with feats of strength and skill. They invited us one evening to join with them and several of the young officers who had recently left college and were trained to athletic sports entered the games. The first thing they tried was a high kick. One of the Spanish officers held a hat, which another kicked. After he had done his best Captain McGregor kicked it. The Spaniards were much surprised and gesticulated and chattered at a great rate. Then one of them went over to where a blind officer stood and taking the blind man's stick explained the kick by showing how many times the length of the stick it took to measure the height of the hat from the ground. The blind man listened, and then shook his head, saying that it was incredible; he declined to believe it. Then one of the Spaniards made a standing broad jump, and one of our officers jumped four feet further. Again the blind man was told with much excited gesticulation how many lengths of his stick it would take to measure the distance covered by the jump, and again indignantly repudiated the possibility of any American outleaping a Spanish officer and gentleman by so great a distance. The high jump was also easily won by an American officer and then the Spaniards brought out their strong man. He took a cannon ball which he raised from the ground with both hands and poised at the level of his shoulder. Then with great difficulty he raised it until it was at his arm's length above his head. Van Houten then came forward. Grasping the ball with one hand he raised it without apparent effort and held it out at arms' length horizontally. This was the closing feat, for the Spaniards had played their trump card. They explained once more to the blind man the feat of strength, and how again the Americano had excelled, and the blind man, apparently believing they were trying to make game of him, threw his stick on the ground and chided them for telling him such falsehoods. After that the Spanish officers issued no more challenges to us.

Sick Men at the Firing Line.

"Refering to instances of brave men, I recall a case that may be called exceptional, for the patriotic zeal of the man resulted in his wearing himself out. Sergeant J. L. Rundell of Company L was a good soldier and not even sickness was able to keep him away from the firing line. When he was quite ill he was ordered to the rear for medical treatment, but he refused to go and by remaining endured exposure and fatigue which was undoubtedly the cause of his death, for he finally succumbed July 20th on the Morgan City when three days from San Francisco.

"Corporal Larrabee of Company M was another man who did duty when he was not physically fit. He was suffering from the effects of fever and although convalescent, he was far from fit for duty. He was ordered back from Calumpit, as he was suffering from tropical ulcers, being covered with them from his neck to his knees. The disease is peculiar to the country and is the result of conditions prevailing there. He was not willing to go, insisting that he would do as well at the front as elsewhere, and he wanted to be where there was need for men. At San Fernando I sent him to the rear, but he refused to stay there, and was soon on the firing line again.

"Captain A. B. Sessions of Company B was one of the youngest among the officers of the First, and one of the most gallant. At Calumpit I saw him during the action bandaging wounds on the field as cool as if the bullets had not been sweeping the field. He was always a good man in any place that duty called him.

"I do not mention these cases because they are exceptional. Almost every officer and man in the regiment has done something to render him worthy of special mention."

Hardships of the March.

That the actions of Rundell and Larrabee were not exceptional in the South Dakota regiment is testified to by Major Surgeon F. J. Adams, brigade surgeon of the First brigade, who returned on the Zealandia. "The army," he said, "had no tropical experience and did not allow for a large enough sick rate. While campaigning the rate ran up to 30 per cent, reducing the effective force very seriously, and the generals could not understand it. They were inclined to believe that the sick reports were padded and that many of the men were shamming to escape the arduous labor, fatigue and danger of duty at the front. Acting under instructions I made an investigation of the South Dakota regiment at San Fernando during the latter part of June just after the hard march from La Loma. The temperature, pulse and respiration of each man in the regiment was taken, and out of 500 men on the line I found only nine that were fit for duty. Four other doctors assisted me in making the examination, and the generals could hardly credit the report."

Concerning Poets.

Here is a Georgia boy's composition on "Poetry:" "A poem is a thing which has rhymes at the last end. A poem also has feet, but some poems don't stand steady on 'em. Poets mostly has long hair, because times is hard, and it's cheaper to let it grow. Poets used to live in garrets, on a crust of bread—when a baker would credit 'em. Now they live on the ground floor, where they can escape easy when the bailiff is after 'em. My father says poetry makes the world better, but my mother says it ain't the kind he writes. Poets have a monument when they die, as people want to weight 'em down so's they can't come back."

RELIGIOUS.

The Free Methodists of England have oldage pensions for their ministers. Each minister pays £3 per year to the fund.

The statistics of the China mission connected with the Episcopal church show that for the year ending July, 1899, there were 109 confirmations, 2,881 baptized church members, 901 communicants.

Miss Margaret B. Barnard has been installed as pastor of the Unitarian church in Chelsea, Mass. Rev. Samuel A. Eliot, secretary of the American Unitarian association, preached the installation sermon.

Amherst college used to be one of the great feeders of the ministry, but only two members of the class of '99 are at divinity schools, while fifteen are teaching, ten are studying law and twenty-five are in business.

The wealthiest clergyman in Scotland, at least among such as have made their money by their work in the pulpit and not by writing lachrymose stories, is Rev. James H. Nutford Mitchell, who has saved £300,000 of his salary since he entered the Presbyterian church.

Dime contributions in the last ten years have built a million-dollar Roman Catholic cathedral in Elizabeth, N. J. It will be dedicated, it is expected, on the 5th or the 12th of November next, and the chimes, it is intended, shall ring for the first time on New Year's Eve, to usher in the year 1900.

During the past decade nearly 70,000 conversions in the schools organized by the American Sunday union have been reported to the society, and within the past eight years over 1,100 churches have been developed from the schools in its mission work. This is surely a magnificent showing of undenominational Christian work.

Rev. Robert MacDonald, pastor of the Washington Avenue Baptist church, Brooklyn, has been appointed one of the preachers to Harvard university for the present year to serve six weeks in residence. He is said to be the youngest clergyman ever thus appointed at Harvard. He is an alumnus of both the college and divinity school of Harvard university, and had a notably successful career as pastor of a church in Boston before coming to Brooklyn, where his present church is prominent in the Baptist denomination in America.

While Bishop Potter admits no more than that he is going to Honolulu, it is generally believed that his destination is the Philippines and that he goes in an official capacity as a member of the "Commission on Increased Responsibilities," recently created by the Episcopal church in America. The bishop will sail from San Francisco about October 23. He is now pretty well established as an anti-expansionist, but the commission he represents is concerned principally, possibly solely, with missionary work of a religious kind.

Rev. Sylvester Malone, the most beloved Roman Catholic priest in Brooklyn, as much esteemed by Protestants as by the church, is lying very ill, and perhaps will not rally. Father Malone has had this paternal title freely given him by heretics, because it belongs to him. He became noted for his patriotism in the war for the union, when he kept the stars and stripes flying from the spire of his church of Sts. Peter and Paul, and he has been notable since as one of the American Catholics. He is also one of the regents of the University of the state of New York.